

Voters' Bill of Rights



U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division–Voting Section

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 protects every American against racial discrimination in voting. This law also protects the voting rights of many people who have limited English skills. It stands for the principle that everyone's vote is equal, and that neither race nor language should shut any of us out of the political process. The Voting Rights Act made these and other discriminatory practices illegal, and gave private citizens the right to sue in federal court to stop them. In recent times, courts have applied the Act to end race discrimination in the method of electing state and local legislative bodies and in the choosing of poll officials. You can find the Voting Rights Act in the United States Code at 42 U.S.C. 1973 to 1973aa-6.

Voters' Bill of Rights

The Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. 1973ee to 1973ee-6) requires polling places across the United States to be physically accessible to people with disabilities.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986 (42 U.S.C. 1973ff to 1973ff-6) requires states to make sure that members of our armed forces who are stationed away from home, and citizens who are living overseas, can register and vote absentee in federal elections.

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (often referred to as the “motor voter” law) requires states to make voter registration opportunities available when people apply for or receive services at a variety of government agencies, from driver’s license offices to social services agencies and public benefits offices. The law says states must not take voters off the rolls merely because they have not voted, and it requires states to keep their voter rolls up to date by removing the names of voters who have died or moved away. It may be found at 42 U.S.C. 1973gg to 1973gg-10.

Voters' Bill of Rights

The Help America Vote Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-252 Title III) requires state to provide voter instructions, including how to correct errors; provide privacy and independence for all voters; provide alternative language accessibility; provide Provisional Voting for those persons who might be registered but who's name does not appear on the official list of eligible voters; provide instructions to ascertain if the vote is counted and why and provide information on whom to call if these rights have been alleged to be violated.

The Justice Department enforces each of these laws by working with state and local governments, advocacy groups, and private citizens, and by bringing lawsuits where necessary, to make sure the protections guaranteed by Congress are extended to all. Also, private citizens may file their own lawsuits under the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act and the National Voter Registration Act.

Anyone with a complaint about voting discrimination can contact the Dept of Justice to let them know what the problem is, where it is, and how it affects minority voters. There are no special forms to use or procedures to follow—just call toll-free at (800) 253-3931. Or you may call the Nebraska Secretary of State's Office at (402) 471-2554. Under Section 401 of HAVA, the U.S.

Voters' Bill of Rights

Attorney General enforces the uniform and nondiscriminatory election technology and administration requirements that apply to the States under Sections 301, 302, and 303 of Title III. He has delegated responsibility for this task to the Civil Rights Division with primary responsibility assigned to the Voting Section, which will coordinate with the Disability Rights Section on HAVA's disability provisions.

If you have questions concerning HAVA, nationally, you may contact Hans A. von Spakovsky (202-305-9750), Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General, or Chris Herren (202-514-1416) and Brian Heffernan (202-514-4755), who are attorneys in the Voting Section. If you have any questions about the disability provisions of HAVA, you may contact Lucia Blacksher (202-514-1947), an attorney in the Disability Rights Section. If you have questions about the implementation of HAVA in the State of Nebraska, you may contact the Nebraska Secretary of State's Office (402) 471-2554.